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endeavoured to extend the boundaries of Russia. The endeavour has been too successful.

The conquest and the advance have been rendered the easier by the pretexts under which they have been and still are carried forward. In the midst of a period of great social change, when free and active thought, in all countries of Europe, except Russia, has gone far to unbind the intellect and loosen the bands of society, Nicholas has appeared as the champion of prescription, of law, of order, of religion; and consequently as the opponent of revolution and anarchy, of infidelity and atheism. Such a position bestows incalculable power. But in what rough and unskilled hands is that awful power placed? Who can endure to think of a cause in substance so sacred being perilled in the custody of such a man and such a prince? What is right in the cause, he is sure to make wrong; and what is bad he is sure to render worse.

THE VILLAGE OF DENIS, ON THE RIVER GABON.

THE Gabon, which forms a receptacle for a number of water courses that have their source in the interior of the continent of Africa, is situated between 10° and 30° north latitude.

It may be considered to be bounded on the right shore by the points Clara and Obendo, upon the left by Pongara and Bohuin, and upon the side farthest from the sea by the islands of Konikey and Perroquets, beyond which extends the river Gabon, which, though of a considerable width near its mouth, narrows rapidly until its breadth is less than a mile. Before the establishment of French settlements upon the coast, Gabon was an important seat of the slave-trade. The wars which the different races inhabiting its banks and the neighbouring regions carried on among themselves, and their distant excursions, continually furnished the slave-ships with a considerable number of captives. The principal agents in the odious trade were the M'Pongos, whose most important village, situated upon the left bank, is called Denis, in honour of the chief who governs it. The M'Pongos are still almost the only agents of the barter which is carried on in the neighbourhood of the Gabon, and, in order to preserve this monopoly, they take care to maintain a mutual distrust between the Europeans and the tribes of the interior. On the one hand, they represent the Boulous, Pahouins, Bakalais, M'Bichos, &c., to us as nations of cannibals, who are constantly prowling about their villages to make captures, in order that they may have a feast on human flesh; and they feign the greatest terror at the mere name of their near neighbours the Boulous. On the other hand, they impress these tribes with the idea that we are rapacious and cruel pirates, when they visit them to procure from them commodities which they afterwards bring to us, such as ivory, wax, and dye-woods. But, in spite of this, the minds of the people of the interior are becoming enlightened as to the truth, and it is probable that, by means of some expeditions despatched to a considerable distance up the principal branch of the river, this trade, which is daily increasing, will soon become direct. Then, perhaps, the Europeans will at length succeed in opening a safe and regular route to the centre of the mysterious African continent, where so many generous missionaries of religion and of science have suffered bondage and death.

The M'Pongos inhabit the banks of the Gabon as far as the islands which surround the basin; their principal villages on the right bank are those of Kringer, Couaben, Louis, and Glass (called by the names of their respective chiefs), each village changing its name, and sometimes its site, with every new governor. Between Louis and Glass rises a wooden block-house, surrounded by palisades, and containing a garrison of Ioloffs, destined to protect the French settlement, built, as is also the Catholic mission, on a table-land overlooking the river. On a second table-land have been constructed magazines and some dwelling-houses; and it is to be hoped that the time is not far distant when a town will spring up around the settle-

ment. Take, as a verification of this, the impiety which marks his present aggression in Turkey. What does he—he, the champion of Christendom? Simply, he plunders a neighbour on the pretext of an express commission from Him who is "just and righteous in all his ways;" and when he has, in his marauding career, butchered thousands of his fellow-men, the children of God, he offers up acknowledgments and thanksgivings to the Common Parent. Worse even than this has been his conduct toward Turkey; for how has he got a footing in the house which he is now wasting and robbing? By duplicity the most consummate, and by contrivances the most disreputable. For the Turk, as a Turk, we have no sympathy; but all the sympathy in the world have we for the cause of justice, freedom, civilisation, and Christianity, which is put in imminent danger by the misdeeds of the great northern aggressor.

ment. An American missionary resides at the village of Glass.

The left bank is lower, and more swampy and unhealthy; on this side are the villages of Denis and Little Denis, in the former of which is to be found the original stock of the M'Pongo race; hence, doubtless, the supremacy of King Denis over the other chiefs of the same nation.

The village of Denis, situated on a peninsula, bounded on the south by the Gabon, is divided into several districts, separated by creeks, the approaches to which are swampy, so that people are obliged to make use of *pirogues* (rude boats used by the savages) to pass from one district to another. The principal street of the central district faces the river; it is long, broad, and built with tolerable regularity; the houses, which are constructed of a lattice-work of bamboo, differ little except in size. They are usually divided into two compartments; in one, the sleeping chamber for the whole family, are spread mats which serve as beds; the other contains the furniture, utensils, and provisions, and is used as assembly-room, kitchen, and store-room. Bananas, papaws, shrubs, and flowers, particularly lilies of a brilliant red, ornament and overshadow the entrance of the house, behind which stretches a curtain of bushy and luxuriant vegetation. In this street is situated the residence of King Denis, which is loftier and more spacious than the others; it is distinguished by some rude architectural ornaments, conspicuous among which are four sculptured columns, in the M'Pongo style, supporting a ledge of the roof, and thus forming a kind of peristyle.

The numerous relations of the king, who seem to constitute an aristocracy, are generally assembled behind the colonnade; and there the chief interests of the village are discussed by those who enjoy the honourable, though costly, privilege of being admitted to the royal presence, for they debate on the affairs of state over the gaming-table. The monarch employs himself almost exclusively in thus gaining the cash and other property of his subjects. No one is, in fact, so clever, or it may be so rash, as to succeed often in defeating the sovereign. The game consists in passing four hard dry berries through each of twelve holes made in a piece of wood, and of which either player has six. It is necessary to play in such a manner, that in taking the berries contained in one of the holes and placing one of them in each of the following, you come to a division in which your enemy has only two berries; that which you place there makes three, and you take; if the hole in which you have previously placed a berry also contained but two, that which has just been placed there making three, you take again; when the divisions of your adversary are thus emptied, the game is ended. The noise which the berries make, quickly handled, resembles that of dice in backgammon.

The people of the village entertain the greatest respect for King Denis; no one dares to pass before his residence when

he is engaged in playing, surrounded by company, without making an obeisance. This veneration for the supreme chief has increased since he was made Knight of the Legion of Honour, as a reward for the services which he rendered on several occasions to the French trade. In return for this extraordinary favour, the M'Pongos lavish upon the French all the affection of which they are capable. Upon the huts of all persons of any importance may be seen an inscription dictated by the proprietor, and written by some soldier or marine, worded something in this way :—

“Prince Bamani, good heart for Frenchman,
Cousin of King Denis, a good courtier.”

Orthography is rarely regarded in these advertisements, and sometimes the writer mischievously makes some addition

of this kind to the dictated encomiums : “Great thief.” Far from suspecting any such perfidy, the personage thus designated shows his sign with a certain degree of pride to new arrivals, as a recommendation likely to serve his interests.

The women are also divided into two castes ; those of the higher class pass their time in working necklaces, bracelets, and other ornaments, of which they are very fond, with little glass beads. Seated upon low benches before their dwellings, they employ themselves thus from morning to night, only interrupting their labour to fill and re-light their pipes. The women of the lower order are employed in the light labour required for the cultivation of yarns, maize, and tapioca, which are indispensable to subsistence in the village. A certain number among them are, from time to time, put into requisition to remove the grass from before the royal dwelling.



THE VILLAGE OF DENIS, ON THE GABON.

THE DEAD BRIDAL.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALL the world knows, that during the summer months of the year, an Italian city presents at the hour of noon an appearance of repose and desertion that, but for the bright sunshine and the open doors of shops, might make one almost fancy that it was night. The *jalousies* of all the windows are closed ; no bright eye looks from the casements ; no light foot trips from the threshold ; no fair form glides along the strada or piazza ; nobody—except, indeed, those insignificant bodies that society always most properly considers as nobodies—we mean mechanics and labourers, or such like folk—is to be seen abroad ; and even they look drowsy and dreamy, as if they would be much better employed in doing nothing, like their betters. And what are their betters doing at this hour ? Why they are sleeping—aye, sleeping, while the sun's rays are at the hottest, and the day is in its meridian glory. Strange as this sight may appear to a denizen of our more northern latitudes, when first he enters a town of southern Italy, yet

he very soon learns not only to cease to wonder at it, but often to shut his eyes upon it altogether—that is, he too finds it a very pleasant thing to go to sleep just like his neighbours. And, indeed, it must be admitted that the southerners earn the right to this short repose by the habit of rising in the morning with the sun—under the delusion, it may be, that the night is then over—and being astir hours before the fashionables of Britain have awakened from their first sleep, and turned themselves upon the other side for their second slumber. If this be the custom in Italy, in our own days, so was it five hundred years ago, and especially in the fair city of Venice, than which—notwithstanding that she reclines, as it were, floating on the waters—a hotter spot cannot be found on a summer noontide between the Alps and the Apennines.

And so it was that, on the first day of July, in the year of grace 1380, the city of Saint Mark lay in the repose of its mid-day slumber. And yet to any eye that was waking and